

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

Lines written on the train between Himeji and Shirahama.

Feeling nostalgic listening to old Joan Baez on the ipod. The world plays out as a foreign movie with the wrong soundtrack. There is no hero or heroine and no real plot. Just a cast of walk-on extras. They could be in any city in the world except that mine is the only face that isn't Japanese. Opposite is Man Who's Still Sleeping Off Last Night's Excesses. Enter Man 2 Who's Heading For The Job He Hates But One Day They'll Recognise His Talents And His Boss Will Get The Humiliation He So Richly Deserves. Right next to Young Girl Who Has Her First Job And Can Finally Afford The Make-up And Trendy Clothes She's Always Wanted. And they'll all make their entrances and exits seamlessly without need of reshoots. Denim-Jacket Uni Student stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the Immaculately-Dressed Businessman he abhors and swears he will never become and doesn't realise yet that in twenty years he will become him. And they all try to ignore each other and forget the fact that they're all in the same movie. But they swing to the right hanging from their straps as the train lurches and brace for the complete halt at Mega Station in complete unison, no more independent than a hive of bees.

And the giggling schoolgirls in the skirts they've hitched up are old enough to be loud and confident in a group and very aware of their budding sexuality but not yet wary or disillusioned like the Men in Suits who fantasise about high school girls in short dresses on trains.

And some people close their eyes because they couldn't go to sleep last night and some close their eyes to avoid the eyes of others and some close their eyes to hide the pain. And their scarves muffle out the cold and put a stop to mingling white clouds of conversation and the smoke and steam from the refinery billows up from behind towering buildings as some dodgy remake of 9/11. And Old Man looks with disdain at Feminized Teenage Boy With Bouffant Hair and Bouffant Collar and wonders how, sixty years after Kamikaze pilots, the nation could come to this and produce these slim-hipped, fine-boned fops in hairclips and Boy in Hair Clip just feels sorry for Old Man who's lost all spontaneity and sense of fun.

The train pulls into Shirahamanomiya. i make my exit. The extras, so inter-related, so separate, so desolate
find themselves unable to reach a conclusion

rob walker

rob walker. 'Lines written on the train between Himeji and Shirahama.'
Transnational Literature Vol. 8 no. 2, May 2016.
<http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>